



# KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## NEWS RELEASE

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## BOARD AWARDS DIPLOMAS TO FORMER KSD STUDENTS

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – At a special ceremony today on the campus of the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD), the Kentucky Board of Education awarded diplomas to African Americans who were enrolled at KSD in the mid-20th century, but did not receive recognition for graduation.

“The Kentucky Board of Education and Kentucky Department of Education sincerely regret that this injustice occurred and intend to correct these past occurrences through the issuance of diplomas to all African-American students who were enrolled at KSD during this time period,” said Board Chair David Karem. “The stain of segregation and denial of rightfully earned recognition cannot be completely erased by issuing these diplomas, but we hope that this action – and our sincere apologies – will bring long-deserved closure for former students.”

Approximately 75 individuals were identified to receive diplomas. These individuals were enrolled at KSD between 1930 and 1955, but left the school without receiving official recognition of graduation or completion of courses.

Kentucky Board of Education members, Education Commissioner Terry Holliday, KSD staff, former students and their family members, state agency officials, state legislators, and local officials attended the ceremony.

Graduates who received diplomas at the ceremony were:

- John Henry Brown
  - Emerson Lee Clay
  - Oscar Hamilton
  - Emma Bell Hill Heard
  - Marilyn B. Allen Jones
  - Pearlene Briscoe Mollett
  - Richard David Riley
  - Norma Jean Williams
  - Beatrice Mollet Woodson (accepted by Henry Woodson)
- (more)

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See News Release 11-061 for a complete list of the individuals identified for recognition.

The Kentucky Board of Education also seeks information about any other former African-American students who were enrolled at KSD, but left the school without receiving recognition of graduation or completion of courses. Individuals should contact KSD Principal Rodney Buis at (859) 239-7017 or [rodney.buis@ksd.kyschools.us](mailto:rodney.buis@ksd.kyschools.us).

In 1823, the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) became the first state-supported school of its kind in the nation and the western hemisphere. KSD has a rich history of ensuring that deaf and hard-of-hearing children and youth in Kentucky have educational opportunities to develop their potential to become educated, life-long learners and productive citizens.

The school currently enrolls approximately 140 students, and the Kentucky Board of Education serves as the board of education for both KSD and the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) in Louisville.

While research conducted by staff at the Kentucky Department of Education and KSB does not indicate that KSB had a similar practice in place, former KSB students who believe they were denied diplomas on the basis of race should contact KSB Principal John Roberts at (502) 897-1583 or [john.roberts@ksb.kyschools.us](mailto:john.roberts@ksb.kyschools.us).

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